



February 19, 2020

*Written testimony of Lizbeth Carmichael, Administrator, Sheriden Woods Health Care Center  
Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2020 and FY 2021 Proposed Budget*

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lizbeth Carmichael. I am the Administrator at Sheriden Woods Health Care Center in Bristol, Connecticut. Sheriden Woods has been providing nursing home care in our community for 33 years. We are a 146-bed nursing home, and we have 250 employees working at our facility.

I want to begin by thanking the Appropriations Committee for supporting increases in last session's budget for nursing home wage and benefit increases for our employees. This has helped with recruiting and retaining workers in Connecticut's very competitive labor market remains one of our major challenges. Having a supply of quality workers to meet the needs of nursing home residents will even be more challenging as the Connecticut minimum wage continue to rise. Please know these new wage enhancement dollars will help in this ongoing struggle to assure quality care for our residents.

In this regard, I want you to know how proud I am to be here on behalf of devoted caregivers at Sheriden Woods, we all want the same thing----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Sheriden Woods. These workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. A recent letter from a family shares their experience "it was clear your staff faces many challenges but the nurses and PT treated my dad with amazing professionalism, as an ex-institutional chief I will say that your meal offerings were always enticing and well executed, the facility was always clean, and like the other staff I encountered, the housekeeping staff clearly took pride in their job responsibilities." Our facility currently has a hospital readmission rate of 13.46% and an average length of stay of 23 days.

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While change is inevitable our nursing home is at a crossroads in 2020 with major changes. "Case Mix" will change the way Medicaid reimburses our nursing home this year. We in concept agree with Case Mix and how it reimburses nursing homes based on the care needs, or acuity, of the residents. Our nursing home is very concerned that the new Case Mix payments will ignore the Medicaid funding shortfalls of the past decade, and that quality care will suffer with insufficient resources. Our nursing home population is older and sicker than it was twenty years ago with much more dementia and Alzheimer's disease than ever before. In addition, today's nursing home resident also have greater behavioral health needs-----mental health and substance use disorders are common on top of the skilled nursing care that today's nursing home residents need. Case Mix could be an answer, but only if the funding shortfall is addressed.

We need your help to deliver the care we all want and please make long overdue nursing home funding a priority in this year's budget.

On behalf of everyone at Sheriden Woods Health Care Center, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.